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ABSTRACT

This booklet presents a description of the Responsive Education Program (REP) by summarizing the book entitled "The Responsive Education Program." Each of the 12 parts of the summary is a two-page abstract of a paper in the book. The papers summarized describe the program's goals, objectives, principles, and application to the classroom and to staff development. Responsiveness is defined and the rationale of the REP is presented. Cognitive and emotional development, and cultural pluralism in the REP are described. Other abstracts focus on learner objectives, principles and teaching guidelines, language and reading, classroom description, staff development, and evaluation in the REP. The final abstract summarizes a program implementation guide. (Author/RH)

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SUMMARY

THE RESPONSIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM

FOR CHILDREN AND ADULT LEARNERS

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THE RESPONSIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM

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Introduction

The Responsive Education Program is a model approach for the education of young children and for the staff development (teacher training) of adults who work with children. It is implemented by a staff development system provided by the program's development, training, and evaluation staff. Funded by the Follow Through Division of the U. S. Office of Education, the program is currently used in approximately 330 primary-grade classrooms in 14 school districts throughout the United States. The goals of the program are to support cognitive growth by promoting the development of problem-solving abilities; to support affective growth by fostering the development of healthy self-concept; and to support social growth by promoting the development of culturally pluralistic attitudes and behaviors.

This booklet presents a description of the program. It is a summary of a book entitled The Responsive Education Program. The summary has 12 parts; each part is a one-page abstract of a paper in the book. For further information, these papers may be obtained from the Responsive Education Program, either separately or in the form of the book.

The papers summarized here describe the program's goals, objectives, and principles and their application to the classroom and to staff development. A separate book describes the processes and procedures for learning to work with children or adults in a Responsive way.

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1. "Responsiveness" Defined

2. Rationale of the Responsive Education Program

3. Cognitive Development in the Responsive Education Program

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1 "RESPONSIVENESS" DEFINED

"Responsiveness" in the Responsive Education Program is the process of seeking to respond sensitively and appropriately to learners' experience and needs. A Responsive approach is used both with children in the classroom and with adults who are learning to work with children in this way. The program's definition of "responsiveness" has grown out of the work of program staff members and of people who have participated in the program.

I. Basic Assumption, Goals, and Approach of the Responsive Education Program. "Responsiveness" assumes that individuals come to a learning situation with valuable personal experience, strengths, and skills. It provides opportunities for learners to build on these assets in developing new skills and abilities.

Responsive education seeks to prepare learners to provide for their own needs and contribute to society. The goals of the program are to support cognitive growth by promoting the development of problem-solving abilities; to support affective growth by fostering the development of healthy self-concept; and to support social growth by promoting the development of culturally pluralistic behaviors and attitudes.

Using curriculum materials "responsively" entails adapting or creating materials in ways that enable children or adults to use their existing skills and experience in learning. Learning experiences often draw on several related curriculum areas and present or simulate real-life situations; learners are guided to acquire and use academic skills (e.g., reading, mathematics) while solving meaningful problems. Learners find out about their own and other cultures through multiethnic resources and have opportunities to share and interact.

II. Characteristics of a Responsive Teaching/Learning Process. A Responsive teaching/learning process provides learners with opportunities to set realistic personal goals and expectations; make decisions within limits; to work, at different times, alone and in various groups; to choose from a variety of materials; to learn from experimentation and discovery much of the time; to use others as resources; to take credit for their accomplishments; to find personal meaning in a learning experience (integrate) and plan the next steps in learning.

III. Further Clarification of Responsive Teaching. The paper compares some teaching practices that are Responsive with some that are not Responsive, in such areas as providing learners opportunities to make decisions; asking questions; arranging the classroom environment; and assessing learners. E.g., it is Responsive to provide learners opportunities to make decisions that are appropriate for their abilities in a particular situation; it is not Responsive to provide all learners with the same number and kind of choices.

IV. Responsive Attitudes and Ways of Working. "Responsiveness" assumes that learners are naturally growth-seeking, provided that growth is supported and nurtured, and respects individual pacing and growth. Responsive teachers and staff developers (teacher trainers) seek to find out what kind of support is appropriate for learners in a particular situation and then provide that support or refer learners to other resources. They provide a learning environment that has flexibility within a structure, allowing for spontaneity and adjustment.

Another aspect of "responsiveness" is being sensitive to one's own needs as well as to the needs of others. "Responsiveness" also entails acknowledging and learning from mistakes.

V. Characteristics of a Responsive Person. Some school district staff members, parents, children, and program staff members in the Responsive Education Program contributed their personal definitions of "responsiveness" or a "responsive" person. These definitions describe some of the characteristics of a Responsive person. A Responsive person expresses authentic feelings appropriately; is willing to adapt; is sensitive; has empathy; creates a supportive environment; helps others in problem solving; takes responsibility for own actions; helps others take responsibility; respects others' pacing and limits; and makes a commitment.

2 RATIONALE OF THE RESPONSIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Responsive Education Program views individuals as simultaneously developing as intellectual beings, as self-perceiving beings, and as social beings. It seeks to prepare learners to take care of their own needs in a rapidly changing society and to contribute to the solution of the pressing problems of society.

In the view of the program, the family and community begin and have primary responsibility for a child's education, but the school plays an important role in continuing it. In contrast to the "compensatory" approach, the Responsive approach assumes that children of all ethnic and economic groups have assets for learning that they have acquired within their families and communities. The school must attempt to respond appropriately to the needs and experience of all children and provide a classroom environment and materials that are familiar to and accepting of all children.

I. Theoretical Foundations. The theoretical foundations of the program come from the work of developmental psychologists such as Piaget; educators such as Bruner and Ausubel; psychologists and sociologists such as Carnoy, Gordon, Friere, and Moore and Anderson; and education philosophers such as Dewey.

These theorists share a humanistic view of people as rational, self-regulating, and self-motivating beings. They view learning as a process in which individuals use previous experience and knowledge to formulate concepts or behaviors that are personally meaningful.

The theorists' contributions to the program can be stated in terms of beliefs about people and beliefs about learning. The beliefs about people on which the program is based are that people strive to know and control themselves and their environment; are growth seeking; are social beings; have individual and cultural values and ways of doing things; and are self-perceiving beings.

The beliefs about learning on which the program is based are that individuals learn by using previous experience to understand new experience, by abstracting from experience, and by seeing the results of their actions. Both physical readiness and practice are necessary for learning new concepts or behavior.

Individuals have unique ways of perceiving and interpreting what they experience. The most important reward for learning is the internal satisfaction of fulfilling the desire to know or of conquering a problem. People seek to resolve dissonance in perceptions and understanding; they acquire new concepts in order to comprehend and master circumstances. Values determine motivation; individuals may be motivated to learn by different goals.

II. Values Underlying the Program's Teaching/Learning Structure and Process. On the basis of these beliefs, the program values:

- intellectual development
- each person's individuality and sense of worth
- equity and pluralistic perspectives
- each individual's way of thinking and learning
- autonomy and the right to personal values
- learning based on what is familiar and meaningful to each individual.

These values underlie the goals and principles of the program. The goals of the program are 1) to support cognitive growth by promoting the development of problem-solving abilities; 2) to support affective growth by fostering the development of healthy self-concept; and 3) to support social growth by promoting the development of culturally pluralistic attitudes and behaviors. The three goals complement and contribute to each other.

Four principles guide the teacher in setting up the environment, planning activities, and interacting with children. The principles are: 1) The learners' experiences, backgrounds, and interests are assets. 2) Learners develop increasing responsibility for and control of their own learning. 3) Learners acquire skills and concepts in the context of meaningful, integrated learning experiences. 4) Learners share knowledge and experience and interact on issues.

Through implementation of these goals and principles, the program proposes to foster capabilities and attitudes that prepare individuals to be self-aware, self-determining problem-solvers and contributing members of society.

3 COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT IN THE RESPONSIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Responsive Education Program seeks to support children's cognitive growth by promoting the development of problem-solving abilities. It emphasizes the process of addressing or formulating issues or questions in need of resolution, thinking creatively and critically while finding solutions, and acting to solve problems effectively and appropriately. The program's support of this goal is based on the belief that the development of problem-solving abilities will help learners meet their own needs and the needs of others in a rapidly changing and diverse society.

The program treats academic skills (e.g., reading, writing, computing) as important tools for problem solving rather than as ends in themselves; children acquire academic skills in the context of meaningful learning experiences that present or simulate real-life situations.

I. Cognition and Cognitive Growth. The four factors that bring about cognitive growth are: 1) physical maturation; 2) experience in performing physical and mental actions; 3) social interaction; and 4) the mind's tendency to resolve dissonance by constructing new knowledge and new ways of thinking. The program seeks to support the mind's natural growth by recognizing and working with these factors.

Thus, in the program's view of cognition or learning, learners actively construct their own knowledge instead of passively receiving it. This view leads the program to use the learners' own questions, interests, and needs as the basis for learning experiences, and to help them toward self-guidance and independence in learning.

An individual's cognitive abilities develop gradually from the instinctive reflexes of the infant to the abstract, logical reasoning of the adult, achieved at the age of 15 or 16 or so. Children think differently and perceive the world differently from adults. Young children see the world only from their point of view; older primary-grade children can take different perspectives and think more logically, but they have not fully achieved the adult ability to think abstractly. They learn best from concrete experience. An awareness of the characteristics of the stages of young children's thinking can help teachers plan appropriate learning experiences and assessment.

Educators and psychologists have produced various descriptions of the elements of learning. The Responsive Education Program considers the significant aspects of learning to be perceiving, integrating, and applying. Perceiving is the learner's use of the senses and past experience to assimilate information. Integrating is the process of finding personal meaning in an experience. Applying is the use the learner makes of what has been learned. To foster confidence, independence, and flexibility in problem solving, the program seeks to support learners in their own ways of perceiving, integrating, and applying, and help them acquire other useful or rewarding ways.

The learner's motivation for a particular learning experience and the purpose of the experience can also affect the outcome. Learning is most productive when learners assume control over their own learning, to the extent they are ready to do so.

II. Classroom Application. The teacher behaviors that support cognitive development in this way are:

1. Modeling the inquiring mind.

2. Gaining and using pertinent information about the learners to provide appropriate, meaningful experiences.

3. Provisioning the learning environment. (Children also participate in setting up conditions and materials of the environment.)

4. Interacting with learners to stimulate independent thought and problem-solving behaviors, by asking open-ended questions; supporting the process of problem solving; helping discover and use various resources; and encouraging child-initiated statements and questions.

The learners' abilities to perceive, integrate, and apply information are fostered through a variety of problem-solving experiences. These activities are such that: 1) Risk taking is nonthreatening. 2) Making reasonable predictions is an important element of the process. 3) Being open to evidence is necessary and reinforced. 4) The time, space, and support provided are sufficient to foster the diligence needed to reach resolution.

While adults strive to promote increasing independence in learners, they provide help to the degree that it is needed. Learners are assessed on the basis of their ability to solve problems effectively in a natural, real-world context.

4 HEALTHY SELF-CONCEPT IN THE RESPONSIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Responsive Education Program seeks to support learners' affective growth by fostering the development of healthy self-concept. This goal of the program reflects the belief that knowing and valuing oneself is important to being an effective and productive member of society.

I. Self-Concept: What It Is and Why It Is Important. Self-concept is what one knows and feels about oneself, or the combination of self-image and self-esteem. People with healthy self-concepts see themselves realistically (have accurate self-images) in that they recognize their strengths and weaknesses and know what to expect of themselves in various circumstances. They value themselves appropriately (have healthy self-esteem) in that they feel good about their strengths and dislike, but accept, their weaknesses and have confidence in their potential to grow.

A healthy self-concept is important to adults because it contributes to one's ability to survive economically and seek satisfaction effectively. It also enhances one's ability to be a productive member of a culturally pluralistic society and to think flexibly in solving real-life problems.

For children in school, a healthy self-concept contributes to self-confidence in learning and to the ability to set realistic expectations. Children with healthy self-concepts generally do well in the classroom because they are self-directing, resourceful, and able to make decisions. High achievement is not always related to healthy self-concept, however; children's psychological health is a goal in itself.

II. Differences Between Children's and Adults' Self-Concepts. Children's self-concepts differ from those of adults in several respects: 1) Their self-images are less well-defined than those of adults, and their self-esteem is more suggestible. 2) Children learn values relatively unquestioningly from people they consider authorities. 3) They are more dependent on others for help in solving problems. 4) They tend to express their feelings more spontaneously and more authentically, although with less control; they are less clear about what they feel.

III. Characteristics of Children with Healthy Self-Concepts. Children with healthy self-concepts generally show certain

characteristics, although they may differ in the behaviors that demonstrate these characteristics. These characteristics are as follows:

1. They use their own values, ideas, and learning styles in their activities.

2. They tend to make their own decisions and attempt to solve problems on their own by using available resources and working effectively within the limits of a situation.

3. They express their feelings authentically and appropriately for a situation.

4. They use feedback from others and their own observations to assess themselves and acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses and take credit for their accomplishments.

IV. Helping Children Develop Healthy Self-Concepts. Four conditions have been found to help children develop healthy self-concepts: 1) Acceptance by the persons who are important to them. 2) Provision of freedom to make decisions within clear, consistent limits. 3) Communication of clear standards that children can use to judge their behavior and the results of their efforts. 4) Opportunities and directions to integrate what they experience into their self-understanding.

These conditions provide the basis for guidelines for teachers to use in helping children develop healthy self-concepts:

1) The teacher supports children in using their values, ideas and learning styles by providing a clear focus for activities; materials and topics that encourage children to express their feelings and ideas; and choices of activities at different levels.

2) The teacher supports children in solving problems, using resources, and making decisions within limits by providing opportunities for decision making; supporting and guiding rather than telling answers; and making rules and limits clear.

3) The teacher supports children in using their feelings authentically and appropriately by encouraging children to express their feelings in various media and in a way that provides the satisfaction they seek.

4) The teacher supports children in using feedback effectively, taking credit, and integrating what they experience by providing opportunities for children to set standards for and evaluate their work and behavior; to receive positive and negative information about themselves; to celebrate what they are proud of and acknowledge what they do not like; and to express what was important and apply what they have learned to new situations.

5 CULTURAL PLURALISM IN THE RESPONSIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM

As a goal of the Responsive Education Program, cultural pluralism requires promoting parent and community participation in the schools, providing an equitable classroom environment, and increasing learners' abilities to interact democratically with others. The program defines cultural pluralism as understanding, respect, and equitable sharing of power among groups of people.

This goal of the program represents a valuing of democracy, of the productive potential of all citizens, and of self-determination and self-affirmation of all individuals and groups. It is a response to the problem that schools have often failed to provide equitable learning opportunities for children of color and of low-income groups, and have often failed to provide learning experiences that prepare learners of all cultures to be members of a pluralistic society.

I. Why Cultural Pluralism? Although our society values democracy, economic oppression and racism have subordinated low-income groups and people of color. Schools have perpetuated this inequity by stratifying students on the basis of ethnic and economic status and valuing white middle-class culture and behaviors, through conscious and unconscious biases in the behavior and attitudes of teachers and counselors and biases in tests and curriculum materials.

The rationale for cultural pluralism includes the following points: 1) Groups have a right to be different. 2) All groups, though different, should be equal. 3) Groups should know about and respect other groups. 4) People tend to gain support from their ethnic group. 5) Groups have thrived because people practice the traditions of their group and contribute to it.

Four strategies for moving toward democracy in society are to: 1) eradicate racism; 2) support group cohesion, self-legitimization, and self-determination; 3) encourage pluralism by promoting respect, interactions, and coalitions among groups; and 4) establish equitable sharing of power among groups.

From these strategies are derived the following three strategies for implementing cultural pluralism in schools.

II. How is Cultural Pluralism Implemented in Schools?

1. Promote equity through parent and community participation. Parents and community members can protect the interests of their children and their culture by participating in assessing needs, setting goals that reflect their concerns, identifying and providing resources (including themselves), and identifying the survival skills needed by their children.

2. Promote an equitable classroom climate. In order to learn, children must be able to understand and find meaning in what is happening in the classroom. Teachers should gain information about the children in their classrooms and provide resources that are familiar and meaningful, and enable children to learn in their primary language, in their own learning style, and in the context of personally and culturally relevant activities. Teachers must model and guide sensitivity to and respect for all groups.

3. Provide learning experiences that socialize for culturally pluralistic skills and attitudes and an interdependent community. The program's objectives for such experiences are derived from the strategies for moving toward democracy and cultural strategies for socializing the young. The objectives are as follows:

A. Learners discover facts about themselves, other people, society, and their relationship to society and to other people. The classroom should reflect the children's own cultures and other cultures, and offer experiences related to authentic interactions among groups. Children should learn about different groups' views of issues and concepts, and about different ways of solving problems.

B. Learners experience strategies for cooperation within groups, cooperation and competition among groups, and effecting social change. Interdependent learning promotes cooperation and a sense of community; working within a group or coalition of groups promotes productive analysis of and action to solve social problems.

C. Learners generate and integrate ideas about group living in relationship to their own daily experience. The problem-solving process is one way for learners to generate and integrate ideas about social concerns and interests. These ideas may become the basis for further study and actions, or they may be concluded with predictions, hypotheses, or fantasy.

6 LEARNER OBJECTIVES OF THE RESPONSIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Responsive Education Program has three goals that are long-range and humanistic in nature. Each of the three goals has a set of objectives that specify shorter-range learner outcomes.

I. A Brief Definition of Educational Goals and Objectives. Educational goals are generally long-range and broad in scope; objectives tend to be shorter-range and narrower in scope. Objectives are ways of seeing that learners are moving toward goals.

II. The Goals of the Responsive Education Program. The goals of the program are 1) that learners develop problem-solving abilities (cognitive growth); 2) that learners develop healthy self-concepts (affective growth); and 3) that learners develop culturally pluralistic attitudes and behaviors (social growth).

These goals are directed to the development of self-determining, self-aware, and socially conscious adults. They complement one another and interact to contribute to the total development of the individual.

III. Learner Objectives. The program's learner objectives specify behaviors in learners that are desired outcomes for the goals. Teachers and other classroom adults help children work toward these outcomes. The objectives emphasize the use of a learning process that can be transferred to any situation. They can be individualized for each child. Like the goals, they support each other and interact.

The learner objectives for the three goals are as follows:

The objectives for the development of problem-solving abilities are that learners:

1. Take initiative in formulating and addressing questions or problems in need of resolution.

2. Use problem-solving processes to acquire academic skills, and use these skills and other abilities to gather information, generate ideas, and evaluate ideas for effective and appropriate solutions.

3. Act to solve problems effectively and appropriately.

The objectives for the development of healthy self-concept are that learners:

1. Use their own ideas and values.

2. Work effectively within limits and draw on available resources when solving problems.

3. Express feelings authentically and appropriately.

4. Acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses, take credit for their accomplishments, and give others credit for their accomplishments.

The objectives for the development of culturally pluralistic attitudes and behaviors are that learners:

1. Know about their ethnic/cultural group and like and contribute to their ethnic/cultural group.

2. Know about other ethnic/cultural groups and respect and interact productively with people of other ethnic and cultural groups.

3. Know about their own and others' relationship to society and work with others to uphold human rights and achieve social justice.

IV. Learner Objectives in Operation. Attainment of the goals and objectives requires that the learning environment support productive, child-centered learning, and that the curriculum content and skills be relevant to the children's experience outside the classroom.

The paper presents two illustrations of learning situations in which children meet some of the objectives. The first is a classroom situation; the second is a situation outside the classroom.

7 PRINCIPLES AND TEACHING GUIDELINES OF THE RESPONSIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Responsive principles and teaching guidelines provide direction and focus for teaching in the Responsive Education Program. The four principles describe the conditions of a learning environment that supports learners' development toward the goals of the program (i.e., development of problem-solving abilities, of healthy self-concept, and of culturally pluralistic attitudes and behaviors). The three teaching guidelines describe ways teachers implement the principles.

I. Responsive Principles. The principles are as follows:

1. The learners' experience, backgrounds, and interests are assets.

2. Learners develop increasing responsibility for and control of their own learning.

3. Learners acquire skills and concepts in the context of meaningful, integrated learning experiences.

4. Learners share knowledge and experience and interact on issues.

II. Guidelines for Responsive Teaching. The guidelines are as follows:

1. The teacher gains information about and understanding of the learners by observing, listening, and questioning perceptively.

   The information concerns primary language of the learners; ethnicity, culture, background, values of the learners; strengths of the learners; needs of the learners and of their world; developmental levels of the learners; learning styles of the learners; skill development of the learners; problems of the learners; ideas, feelings, and actions of the learners; interests of the learners.

2. The teacher uses the information gathered to create learning experiences that are reality-based, logical, and pluralistic.

The experiences and materials are familiar and relevant; provide a variety and range of options and resources (e.g., from concrete to abstract; from simple to complex; multi-ethnic); provide for initiation of self-expression; use learners' interests as the basis for skill development; provide freedom within clearly defined limits; provide for goal setting, assessment, and integration; provide a variety of perspectives on any issue.

3. The teacher develops an interdependent community of learners by modeling, guiding, and supporting positive peer-group interactions on real-world issues.

The peer-group interactions are related to raising of questions, issues, and problems to be solved; working on solutions to issues and tasks; goal setting, information gathering, sharing, assessing, and integrating; fair and respectful interactions with all groups; discussing myths and stereotypes.

III. An Example of an Episode in a Responsive Classroom. The paper presents an illustration of the operation of the principles and teaching guidelines.

IV. Theoretical Base. The Responsive principles and guidelines are based on four sources of theory:

1) The developmental learning theory of Piaget that states that children actively construct knowledge as they develop naturally and interact with their environment.

2) The cultural pluralism theories of Carnoy, Castañeda, Fanon, Freire, Gordon, Hilliard, Mercer, and Rist that focus on the need for equitable interactions among and treatment of all individuals and groups.

3) The sociological theories of Moore and Anderson that describe the conditions of an environment through which the young of any culture have successfully assimilated knowledge, skills, behaviors, and attitudes necessary for survival.

4) The humanistic theories of Maslow, Rogers, Combs, and Brown that emphasize a synthesis of the cognitive, affective, and social elements in individual and group learning.

8 LANGUAGE AND READING IN THE RESPONSIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Responsive Education Program treats the acquisition of reading skills as part of a broader language program. It draws on the findings of developmental psychology and linguistics for information about the nature of language, the way learners acquire language, and the way reading fits into the total use of language.

I. The Nature of Language. Language is any medium by which people communicate with themselves and others. Language in all forms consists of three elements: symbols, meanings, and structure. Reading--like speaking, listening, and writing--is a language process. It is a means by which people receive written communication. It depends on all three elements of language.

II. Language Acquisition, Processing, and Expansion. Four general points about the way young children acquire the use of oral language apply to the development of reading skills. 1) Young learners are naturally motivated to acquire language by a desire to communicate. 2) The content of learners' speech is topics that have personal meaning. 3) Language users help children acquire language by modeling the use of language; emphasizing communication of meaning rather than technical accuracy; and providing encouragement. 4) Learners' progress is best measured by the standard of whether they are able to communicate effectively.

The mind processes language holistically rather than one word at a time, and some words carry more information than others. Thus strict adherence to a standard dialect is not essential to effective communication.

The Responsive Education Program advocates helping learners expand their language use to become aware of and competent in a variety of options (e.g., standard usage, native language or dialect, varying degrees of formality, and so forth). To aid language expansion, teachers should enable learners to hear a variety of options, and should accept variation.

III. The Act of Reading. Reading is to written language what listening is to oral language. It is an interaction between the reader and author. It is a silent process in its natural state; oral reading performance is not necessarily an accurate representation of silent reading competence. It is a problem-solving process in which the reader predicts, confirms, and comprehends the author's message. The substitution of logical synonyms

("miscues") often indicates the reader has successfully grasped the author's meaning.

These points about language and reading indicate that the material with which children learn to read should be whole, meaningful language. As children learn to predict, confirm, and comprehend the author's message, they should learn to use clues related to word meaning and language structure as well as to sound/symbol associations (phonics). They should be assessed in terms of whether they understand what they read.

IV. Responsive Goals and Principles for Language and Reading. The general goals and principles of the program can be applied to language and reading. The goals for language and reading are to help children develop oral and written language skills; to help children develop healthy self-concepts as language users; and to help children become aware of and respect various dialects and languages, and build a repertoire of useful options.

The Responsive principles for language and reading are that children's natural language is an asset; that children participate in selecting content and evaluating their work; that children acquire skills in the context of activities that have personal meaning and practical application; and that children extend and complement one another's skills.

V. Application to the Classroom. The paper describes a classroom in which the Responsive approach to language and reading is being implemented.

Communication is emphasized as the primary purpose of language. Oral language is used as a bridge to the acquisition of written language skills.

The role of adults in the classroom is to: 1) model purposeful and enjoyable uses of language; 2) help children use existing language abilities to strengthen oral skills and begin the acquisition of reading skills; 3) guide the acquisition of effective reading strategies; 4) adjust language instruction to individual children; and 5) keep records of children's progress, needs, and interests.

9 CLASSROOM DESCRIPTION OF THE RESPONSIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM

This paper describes ways that the goals, objectives, and principles of the Responsive Education Program operate in the classroom. The goals, objectives, and principles can be implemented in many different ways. The approach a teacher chooses to use may depend on the teacher's previous experience and preference of teaching style; the children's interests, learning styles, and levels of development; the physical facilities available; and requirements established by the school district.

I and II. Classroom Examples. The paper presents two illustrations of primary-grade Responsive classrooms. These particular classrooms are a combined kindergarten and first-grade classroom and a combined second- and third-grade classroom. In the first, curriculum areas are usually presented in the context of a project or theme (e.g., making a post office); the room arrangement varies according to the project. In the second, general curriculum areas (e.g., language and social studies) are scheduled for specific times of day, and the room contains learning centers related to curriculum areas. Other age groupings, approaches to curriculum areas, and room arrangements are possible in a Responsive classroom.

In these classrooms, children work in a variety of groups (small groups, large groups, and alone). The environment and curriculum materials reflect the children's cultures and other cultures.

Learning experiences are based on the children's interests and needs and present or simulate real-life problem-solving situations. Teachers provide resources and pose open-ended questions in a way that guides children to formulate and discover the answers to their own questions or problems (cognitive, affective, and social). Children gain academic skills (e.g., reading, mathematics) while solving meaningful problems.

Teachers help children develop increasing responsibility for their own learning. Children have opportunities to make decisions within clear limits, to find personal meaning in learning experiences (integrate), and to transfer what has been learned to other situations.

Materials and activities enable children to use their own ideas and values and to work at their own pace and in their own

style. Teachers plan carefully but are flexible. As a basis for planning, teachers observe the children's interests, learning styles, and levels of development. Children keep some of their own records of their progress and activities.

Children learn about their own and other cultures, use each other as resources, and experience cooperative group learning.

III. Some Questions and Answers about Responsive Teaching. The paper answers some questions that may have been suggested by the classroom descriptions.

The program assumes that teachers may be at various levels of development toward becoming Responsive. It views teachers as moving along a continuum toward becoming Responsive at a rate that is appropriate for the individual and for the program.

Learning centers (for particular curriculum areas or for particular projects) can provide children with opportunities to share ideas and get individual attention. It is not essential to use learning centers, however. The program encourages teachers to move toward flexible grouping of children, with or without the use of learning centers, at an appropriate pace.

The degree of structure in the daily schedule may vary from classroom to classroom. The schedule should be based on the needs of the teachers and the children, as well as on school requirements.

Teachers seek to help children take responsibility for their behavior by establishing clear, consistent limits and meaningful consequences for disruptive behavior. They try to provide opportunities for children to express negative feelings in alternative, socially acceptable ways and help children solve personal and interactional problems. Children share in planning some of the rules for the classroom.

In the view of the program, rewards for children's accomplishments and good behavior should come from within. Teachers help children acknowledge and take credit for their accomplishments.

The program views the teacher and teacher assistant as a team. They support and complement each other. Parents participate in making decisions and setting goals. They share with teachers their interests, concerns, and ways of doing things.

10 STAFF DEVELOPMENT IN THE RESPONSIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM

I. The Responsive Education Program's Approach to Staff Development. Although adults' and children's learning differ in some respects, the approach used in staff development (teacher training) is similar to that used in the classroom. Staff development is guided by the four Responsive principles:

1. The learners' experience, backgrounds, and interests are assets.

2. Learners develop increasing responsibility for and control of their own learning.

3. Learners acquire skills and concepts in the context of meaningful, integrated learning experiences.

4. Learners share knowledge and experience and interact on issues.

Teachers have opportunities to set their own objectives for learning; to work at their own pace and in their own style; to build on their existing skills and experience; to assess their own progress; and to choose their modes of learning.

Staff development is implemented by a staff developer. The staff developer may be a skills specialist, a school principal, or a person who has been specifically assigned to provide inservice training for teachers and teacher assistants. The staff developer works with teachers to set individual objectives; acts as a resource for teachers; and provides inservice training in a variety of forms. The forms of training include:

1. Group and individual training workshops and consultations.

2. Reading materials (e.g., information about the program, books, journal articles).

3. Audio-visual materials (e.g., videotapes, films, slide sets, tape recordings).

4. Visits to classrooms for demonstrations, observation and feedback, and discussions of individual children or classroom materials and activities.

5. Provision of information about relevant workshops and seminars at local colleges and educational institutions.

The Responsive process of learning a new way of teaching is based on the teacher or staff developer identifying concerns or interests. It then takes the form of the following steps:

1. Clarifying program expectations, setting goals, and establishing a focus for learning.

2. Gathering information about and/or experiencing the new way of teaching, generating and evaluating plans for using it, and determining criteria for success.

3. Applying the new approach in the classroom.

Teachers' experiences in staff development may vary according to the teachers' learning styles and paces, the needs and interests of the teachers and the children in their classrooms, and requirements of the school district.

II. Example of a Teacher's Experience. The paper presents an example of a teacher's experience in staff development, from the point of view of the teacher.

III. Example of a Staff Developer's Experience. The paper presents examples of three teachers' experiences in staff development, from the point of view of a staff developer providing a staff development program for a group of teachers and teacher assistants.

11 EVALUATION IN THE RESPONSIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM

Evaluation in the Responsive Education Program is designed to support and document the program in achieving its three goals (i.e., promoting the development of problem-solving abilities, of healthy self-concept, and of culturally pluralistic behaviors and attitudes). It reflects a commitment to be fair and responsive to the individuals and groups participating in the program.

I. A Responsive Approach to Evaluation. In any educational evaluation system, a concern for fairness requires that evaluation provide useful information; specify criteria and use appropriate methodology; and be accurate. A concern for responsiveness further requires that evaluation in the Responsive Education Program provide meaningful information to those who participate; consider the particular goals and priorities of the program; and use a wide range of techniques.

Two areas in which these notions call for significant departures from traditional practices are assessment of differences in the context of cultural pluralism, and assessment of the Form of Educational Experience. The design, administration, and interpretation of traditional assessment have often been biased against children of color and of low-income groups; the program supports evaluation practices that promote equity and pluralistic perspectives. Since the form as well as the content of education experience influences children's cognitive, affective, and social growth, the program evaluates such variables as classroom process and school environment.

II. How Does Responsive Evaluation Work? To assess achievement of its goals and to meet its concerns for fairness and responsiveness, the program has developed and is continuing to develop a number of new instruments and techniques. It sometimes uses traditional instruments and techniques.

Evaluation projects cover the following areas:

1. Child development and achievement. The program has developed a variety of instruments to assess children's development in the personal and social domains, in oral and written language, and in problem solving. It sometimes uses standardized tests to demonstrate children's cognitive achievement. It emphasizes reflecting a wide range of individual experience and achievement.

2. Teaching. The Responsive Classroom Observation Schedule is designed to provide teachers with information about the degree to which the environment, materials, and activities in their classrooms are Responsive. Use of the schedule emphasizes teachers' professional development.

3. Parent participation. The program assesses parent participation, both in supportive activities and in policy making.

4. The system in which the program is implemented. The Educational Forces Inventory represents on a two-dimensional grid (strong-weak, positive-negative) teachers' ratings of forces that influence them (e.g., school principals, other teachers, facilities, state mandates, and so forth.) Within a school district, this information can be used for setting program development priorities. The program also assesses program implementation and conducts case studies to assess the impact of the Responsive Education Program on a particular community.

III. Effects of the Responsive Education Program. The effects of the program have been documented in 1) studies commissioned by the federal government in connection with Project Follow Through and conducted by outside investigators; 2) evaluations carried out by the program itself; and 3) findings compiled by individual school districts participating in the program.

Findings from these three sources indicate that:

1. Cognitive development and academic gains of children in the Responsive Education Program have kept pace with or exceeded those of children in other programs and in classrooms of the same age group. There is a positive relationship between the degree to which the program is implemented in the classroom and the amount of children's cognitive achievement. Children's attitudes toward themselves and toward learning are more positive in Responsive classrooms.

2. The teaching/learning environment in Responsive classrooms provides children with more meaningful choices, and enables them to take more initiative in and responsibility for their own learning.

3. Parent participation is greater in Responsive classrooms than in contemporary classrooms or in other educational programs.

4. System effects of the Responsive Education Program include high teacher morale and positive working relationships between teachers and teacher assistants.

12 IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

An analysis of school districts' experience in implementing the Responsive Education Program has identified ten areas that community and school system decision makers should consider when implementing a new educational program. The Implementation Guide describes each area and presents a checklist of tasks to assist decision makers in considering each area.

The ten areas are as follows:

I. Information and Knowledge about the Program. Key decision makers or "stakeholders" (those who are in a position to influence the program and those who may be affected by it) should be identified. They should participate in information gathering or be informed about the program.

II. Decision to Adopt or Adapt the Program. Decision makers should consider the compatibility between the program and district, the changes required in the program or district, and the resources available.

III. Selection of Sites. In selecting the schools and classrooms in which the program will be located, decision makers should consider the students, administrators, neighborhood setting, and facility requirements in relationship to the program.

IV. Selection of Staff. The staff's compatibility with the program's goals, values, and approach should be considered. Staff roles should be clarified.

V. Selection of Curriculum Content and Process. Decision makers should compare the program's curriculum requirements with those of the district, and resolve conflicts.

VI. Provision of Resources. Decision makers should identify and project the financial, physical, and personnel resources needed and arrange for their provision.

VII. Training of Personnel (Staff Development). The sequence, schedule, and approach (e.g., individualized, small-group, large-group) for staff development should be determined. The staff developer's role and relationship to other district personnel should be defined. (The content and process of staff development are an integral part of the program itself.)

VIII. Interaction with Other School Programs. Decision makers should identify and project the program's interaction with ongoing district programs and with other new programs. They should take action to assure the stability of the program.

IX. Operationalizing the Program. When the staff has begun to operate the program, decision makers should take steps to help them maintain the potential for success.

X. Evaluation. Program evaluation should meet criteria of validity, reliability, timeliness, and credibility. Formative evaluation should provide a basis for refining the program at various stages of implementation. Summative evaluation should provide a basis for deciding whether to terminate, continue, or expand the program.